

**State Board of Education
Briefing Paper
Annualized High School Credit Definition**

Issue/Definition: This paper focuses on the first of two State Board of Education (SBE) definitions of a high school credit: the Carnegie Unit – “Grades nine through twelve or the equivalent of a four-year high school program, and grades seven and eight under the provisions of RCW 28A.230.090(4) and (5): (a) One hundred fifty hours of planned instructional activities approved by the district...” (i.e., a 50-minute class times 180 days).

If a school offers a schedule whereby the hours are less than the Carnegie Unit (150 hours of planned instructional activity – “seat time”), the school is required, annually, to seek a waiver from the SBE. The annual exemption petition is typically requested in April of the current school year so that school calendars can be developed and advertised for the following school year. A letter signed by the school district superintendent and board chair is required. Additional requested documentation may include the following: schedules and calendars; surveys of staff/families/students; evidence of improved test scores; and, if renewing the waiver, benefits of enhanced learning while on the schedule, evaluation of the schedule, and any other pertinent information related to the school’s schedule.

RCW/WAC Cites: RCW 28A.230.090, WAC 180-51-050, and WAC 180-51-100

State Board Role: “Annual exemptions to the definition of an annualized high school credit may be granted upon the request of a public or approved private school which offers evidence that delineates content, time, or competency assessments which are substantially equivalent to the definition stated in WAC 180-51-050.”

In the past, the SBE has given staff authority/responsibility to judiciously review these requests and respond to schools in a timely manner. Typically, there are 35-40 schools that request this waiver each spring. This activity is routine and the timing is such for schools that the approval is needed sometimes prior to the scheduling of a SBE meeting. SBE staff provides an annual report to the board on this activity.

OSPI Role: This same process is mirrored by the OSPI Private School office for those SBE approved private schools.

Effect on School Districts: This waiver allows schools and districts to move forward with innovative strategies, schedules, and calendars. This waiver is almost always requested to implement a block schedule. Example: Students complete eight classes per semester and courses are run on an alternating day schedule with four classes taught on day one and four different classes taught on day two. The 135 hours is 15 hours short of the Carnegie Unit definition. A traditional schedule typically is a six or seven-period day.

Recommendation from Staff: Staff needs direction from the reconstituted board as to whether or not they wish to continue the current method of operation.

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